



AAC Publications

Loinbo Kangri, North-Northwest Face, Loinbo Direct

Tibet, Trans-Himalaya – Gangdise Range

On September 8, Kazuya Hiraide and Kenro Nakajima arrived in Lhasa, and three days later reached the village of Kajang by 4WD. When the onward trek to base camp on the north side of Loinbo Kangri (7,095m) was thwarted due to the unavailability of any animals to carry baggage, they and their gear were taken to base camp on motorbikes. This camp was established on the 13th at 5,280m in the valley northeast of Loinbo Kangri, one kilometer before reaching a small glacial lake. After this the two Japanese were on their own, without the usual trappings of Chinese cooks and base camp staff.

The weather was good, and over the next five days the pair reconnoitered the north-northwest face and acclimatized by climbing the easier-angled north-northwest spur on the left side of the face. They reached a height of 6,750m on this spur, which they planned to use as their descent route, sleeping one night at 6,250m.

They returned to base camp on the 18th and then planned to wait for a good weather forecast. However, when they realized that a large storm predicted on the afternoon of the 20th might deposit new snow that would take some days to consolidate, and as conditions on the mountain were currently very good, the pair elected to have take one rest day and make an attempt on September 20, despite some misgivings about their acclimatization.

They set off with food for two days, two 50m, 7.5mm ropes, a number of ice screws, and four snow stakes. Thin but solid névé overlying ice made for good but sustained frontpointing for much of the way, with protection from screws. A strong wind ensured the pair was frequently swept by spindrift. In late afternoon, at 6,760m on the face, they spent two hours chopping a tent site, somewhat higher than they had planned to spend the night. There was a large thunderstorm, and Nakajima, feeling the altitude, was unable to eat or drink.

Despite the overnight snowfall, the pair reached the summit early next morning, and from there descended the northeast ridge for a short distance before heading down the north-northwest spur. They reached base camp the same day, having completed Loinbo Direct (1,400m, WI5). On the 23rd the two started their journey out to Lhasa and were back in Japan on the 27th.

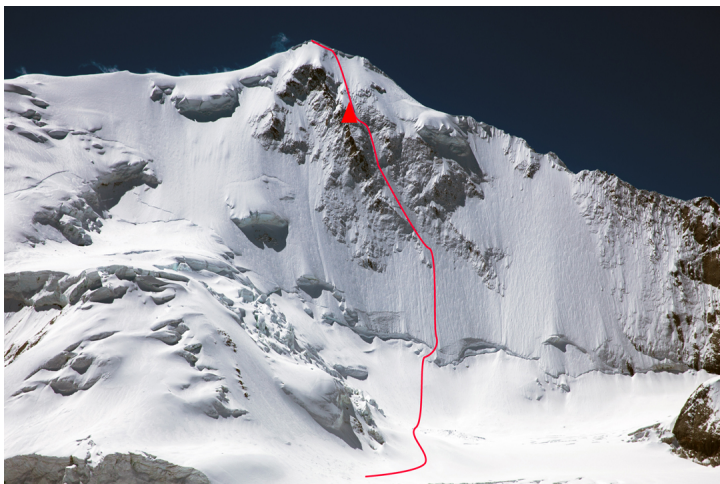
Lindsay Griffin, from information supplied by Hiroshi Hagiwara, Rock and Snow, Japan

Editor's note: Few climbers have visited the Loinbo Kangri Group, an area characterized by often sharp, granitic summits. The highest peak, Loinbo Kangri (7,095m), was first climbed in October 1996 by Koreans Bang Jung-hil, Cha Jing-choi, and You Seok-jae, via the northeast ridge (**AAJ 1998**). Two years previously, this route had been attempted by Japanese climbers. From 1998 to 2005, small British parties made four visits, climbing some of the lower summits. They were largely hampered by either poor weather or illness. In 2006 a multinational team enjoyed perfect weather throughout its stay and climbed a number of peaks, including the elegant Phola Kyung (6,530m), Gopalho (6,450m), and Kangbulu (6,655m), the second-highest mountain in the range. This team noted a good ice couloir on the north face of Loinbo Kangri—the one eventually climbed by the Japanese. Their visit appears to be the last by climbers until 2016.

Images



Loinbo Kangri from the north. The left skyline is the northeast ridge climbed on the first ascent of the mountain (1996). The north-northwest face, climbed in 2016 to make the second ascent, drops directly from the highest point. To its left, the more gently angled north-northwest spur, with a shoulder partway up, was used for descent.



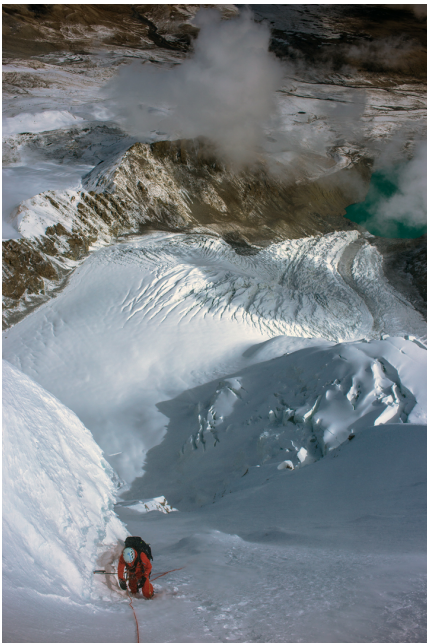
Loinbo Direct and bivouac on the 1,400m north-northwest face of Loinbo Kangri.



Acclimatization on the north-northwest spur.



On the thinly névé-covered ice slopes of the north-northwest face of Loinbo Kangri.



Nearing the top of the north-northwest face of Loinbo Kangri.



Emerging from the north-northwest face onto the final section of the northwest ridge after overnight snowfall.

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